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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000967

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SUBJECT: NEPAL'S MAOISTS STRIVING TO WIN HEARTS AND MINDS  
IN RURAL NORTHWEST

REF: ACOMPANYING POWERPOINT PRESENTATION PROVIDED TO  
THE DESK.

Classified By: Charge d'affairs Robert K. Boggs for reasons 1.5 (b) and  
(d).

Summary  
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1. (C) From April 26 to May 4, Embassy and USAID representatives traveled to Nepal's northwest district of Dolpa. Fifteen of the district's twenty-five villages are affected by Maoist activities, with six in the southwest highly affected. Maoists in the district have begun some development work, in some cases applying to the Government for materials. In the district's Tibetan-speaking north, Maoist outreach programs have been ineffective due to language and cultural barriers. A May 3 Maoist political rally held in the district headquarters was approved by the district government, which also provided food for up to 300 attendees. Political parties' activities are limited to the district's headquarters. They charge that the Maoists are violating the terms of the cease-fire and not allowing freedom of travel to others. Should the cease-fire break, the government will have difficulty maintaining control of southern Dolpa without significant military reinforcement. End summary.

Embassy and Aid Officers Visit Maoist-affected Dolpa  
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2. (SBU) From April 26 to May 4, Embassy and USAID representatives traveled to Nepal's northwest district of Dolpa to evaluate USG development and environmental projects (septel) and the security situation. The trip entailed travel by foot three days north and one day west of district headquarters Dunai and encompassed many of the areas afflicted by seven years of Maoist attacks in Dolpa. The district is still recovering from two significant attacks. On April 2, 2002 the Maoists attacked Juphal Airport, closing it for six months, while a September 25, 2000 attack on Dunai killed 14 police and injured 24. The closure of the airport suspended government imports of rice, reportedly causing food shortages.

3. (SBU) Since 1996, the Maoists have destroyed all the district's local government offices outside of Dunai; 16 of 17 police posts (the airport's police post was restored one week before our arrival); 14 forestry offices (the one remaining field office is now abandoned); the Juphal Airport terminal; the jail; and a small Royal Nepal Army garrison. The Embassy and USAID group identified Maoist slogans painted on homes and prominent rock outcroppings on trails to the north and west of Dunai, while Maoist flags were also displayed in villages to the west of Dunai.

Overview of Dolpa  
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4. (U) The district is home to an estimated 29,000 people and is roughly bisected by topography and ethnicity. The mountainous north is inhabited by the Tibetan-speaking Dolpo-pa, while the south is dominated by Nepali-speaking Hindus. The district has no motorable roads. A four-day walk is required to reach the nearest roadhead southwest of the district headquarters. The district has one airport, in the village of Juphal, a three-hour walk from the district headquarters. The district is bordered by the Maoist strongholds of Rukum and Jajarkot to the south and increasingly Maoist-affected Jumla to the west.

Security Forces' Reports of Maoist Activities in Dolpa  
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5. (SBU) Government control in the district is strictly limited to the district headquarters in Dunai and the Juphal airport. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Bachaspati Regmi stated that of the district's twenty-three villages, fifteen, mostly in the district's west, were affected by Maoists, with six in the southwest highly affected. He

reported that the Maoists allowed government health posts and schools to operate. The DSP also stated that fifteen families had fled from southwestern Dolpa to the district headquarters, but because of the cease-fire are now willing to return home. The police continue to patrol one day's distance east and west from Dunai. The DSP reports that during these patrols they find little activity. The police in Dolpa no longer hold any Maoists prisoner, as they have been unable to take prisoners into long-term custody after the jail was destroyed in the September 2000 attack. The Maoist military wing is armed with Lee-Enfield .303 rifles (stolen from the police and army), muskets, and home-made socket bombs. Royal Nepal Army (RNA) Company Commander Major Raji Pandey and his deputy, Captain Laba Thapa, reported that their company patrols one day north into the national park. The USG team found the Army's well-marked campsite in the park. The position was located on two sides of a wooden bridge and surrounded by Maoist graffiti.

#### Maoist Development Programs =====

16. (SBU) According to Chief District Officer (CDO) G. P. Dhakal, Maoists in western parts of the district have undertaken the construction of trails and toilets and the rebuilding of a school. The Maoist leadership has approached the CDO for materials to complete drinking water and bridge projects. The CDO stated that he has refused these requests for now by reporting that neither he nor the Local Development Office have the materials available. Members of the USG team witnessed a Maoist cadre leaving a non-governmental organization office (NGO) in Dunai. The NGO staff later reported that the cadre had been seeking information on the project. The Dutch development agency, SNV, is building a trail in southwestern Dolpa and reportedly has to coordinate with the Maoists in order to move the project forward.

#### Dolpa's Maoists Ineffective with Dolpa's Tibetans =====

17. (SBU) From September 27 to 30, the USG group traveled north into Dolpa's Shey-Phoksumdo National Park and regularly observed Maoist graffiti along the trail. At the northernmost point in the team's travel on the shore of Phoksumdo Lake, the ethnically Tibetan villagers reported that they had been approached by the Maoists. However, the villagers said they did not trust these outsiders and had difficulty in understanding their Nepali.

#### Maoist Political Rally =====

18. (SBU) The USG team learned that the Maoists would be conducting a cultural program in the district headquarters on May 3. (Note: In an area where entertainment of any sort is rare, cultural exhibitions of dance and song draw a large crowd. The Maoists have turned these events into rallies in order to deliver their political messages. End note.) The CDO and DSP reported that a Maoist representative had approached them for approval of the event. The CDO and DSP stated that the program was within the cease-fire's code of conduct and that they had no objection to the event, as long as the Maoists came unarmed and out of uniform (also terms of the code of conduct). When the representative requested that the CDO provide government rice for the program's estimated 1,500 participants, the CDO said he responded that he would provide rice for no more than 300. The CDO reported that the Maoist representative agreed to the terms. The USG team was unable to learn the actual level of attendance.

19. (SBU) On May 2, members of the USG team trekked west of the district headquarters. En route, one member witnessed forty Maoist cadres in transit to the next day's cultural program. The Maoists were between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five, all of lower castes, well-dressed in western clothing, and well-fed. Two exceptions were the upper-caste Maoist District Military Commander, who was in his mid-thirties, in uniform, and carrying a battery-powered bullhorn, and an upper-caste man in his early forties of unidentified rank. Many of the group's members carried personal tape players and radios. These items are considered luxuries in this rural area, requiring expensive imported tapes and batteries to operate. As the USG team stopped in a village 5 kilometers to the west, a local hotelier relayed stories of a Maoist cultural program (cum political rally) that took place in neighboring Jumla district headquarters a week earlier.

#### Maoists Restrict and Victimize Political Parties =====

10. (SBU) The Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML) and the Nepali Congress (NC) parties continue to have representatives in the district headquarters. In

past elections, the UML won 60-80 percent of the local polls, while the NC won no more than 5 percent at any time. The UML District Secretary reported that of the more than 120 UML cadre killed nationwide by the Maoists during the conflict, one was in Dolpa. The individual was tortured with a knife and killed in front of his family. The UML Secretary charged that the Maoists are violating the code of conduct, continuing to extort money and food, and compelling attendance at Maoist meetings. He also charged that the political parties are not allowed freedom of movement within the district, with the Maoists using robbery and beatings to enforce this internal travel ban. On May 2, the USG team met the NC District Secretary on the trail, as he was fleeing from the Maoists in the district headquarters. His departure was understandable. Prior to the cease-fire, the NC Secretary had been held for two weeks by the Maoists and

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beaten.

Comment  
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11. (C) The Maoists in Dolpa are capitalizing on the lack of government presence in this remote district, due in large part to their campaign of violence there over the past seven years. The cease-fire has allowed Maoist cadres to move throughout the district and the district headquarters unhindered by the security forces. The Maoists' efforts appear to be aimed at restoring popular support, damaged after their attack on the airport and destruction of other government infrastructure. The security forces have no plans or resources to reassert government control, and the political parties reported no plans to revitalize and mobilize support. International NGOs have continued to operate in the district. It appears, however, that their efforts are closely monitored by the Maoists. Should hostilities resume, the government presence in southern Dolpa will be hard-pressed to cling to its limited territory and will certainly be unable to carry forward any pacification programs without massive reinforcement.  
BOGGS